

BRIEFS

WEATHER WOES LEAD TO DELIVERY DELAYS

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — A Jan. 16-17 winter storm that dropped snow and generated sub-freezing temperatures across much of Mississippi has caused delayed delivery of the Jan. 18 issue of The Baptist Record. "The inability of the Record's staff to navigate treacherous roads and bridges in the Jackson area to reach the Baptist Building resulted in the suspension of production and printing activities until the weather cleared up sufficiently," said William H. Perkins Jr., the Record's editor. "To our loyal readers, we regret this delay and hope to make it through the remainder of Winter 2018 without any further weather complications."

CHILD DIES AT NEW ORLEANS SEMINARY

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — A two-year-old child died Jan. 11 at the Early Learning Center (ELC) at New Orleans Seminary, losing consciousness after choking on food. Efforts to resuscitate the child were unsuccessful. "Our hearts are overwhelmed with sadness in the loss of one so young," said seminary president Chuck Kelley. "May all of us join together in praying for God's grace, comfort, and strength to minister to this family and all of those affected by this tragic loss." The ELC is a state-licensed child care center, currently enrolling 76 children.

MUSLIMS GAIN IN U.S. POPULATION

WASHINGTON (BP) — Elevated by a high birth rate and increasing immigration, Muslims will likely surpass Jews as the second largest religious group in the U.S. by 2040 — behind only Christians, the Pew Research Center reported in its latest analysis released Jan. 3. "Religious conversions haven't had a large impact on the size of the U.S. Muslim population, largely because about as many Americans convert to Islam as leave the faith," Pew said. Pew estimated Christians currently comprise nearly 71 percent of the U.S. population.



SBC Meeting set for July 12-13 Messengers to focus on evangelistic theme

DALLAS (BP and local reports) — "Testify! Go. Stand. Speak," will be theme for the 2018 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting June 12-13 at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas, SBC President Steve

Gaines has announced. Evangelism is the urgency of the theme anchored in Acts 5:20, said Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Church near Memphis, in a Jan. 17 interview with Baptist Press.

"Fulfilling the Great Commission has always been at the

see SBC on p. 9

Lottie Moon gifts reflect increase

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Southern Baptists' support of international missions through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) is 4.1% ahead of the same time frame as the 2016-17 offering, according to a report by Rodney Freeman, treasurer and vice president of support services at Southern Baptists' International Mission Board (IMB) in Richmond, Va.

At the end of December, IMB had received \$15,221,629 for the 2017-18 campaign which began Oct. 1 of last year and continues through Sept. 30 of this year. The Oct. 1 through Dec. 31 total is \$600,027 ahead of the 2016-17 pace for the first three months of the offering.

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DINNER IN A NET — A member of the Lozi people group in Zambia uses an age-old method to attempt to catch small fish in a marsh in Zambia to feed her family for one more day. Gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions support Southern Baptist missionaries working to reach the Lozi and an array of people groups worldwide with the Gospel. (BP photo)

CPC list does not satisfy all observers

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — The Trump administration's first designations of the world's worst violators of religious freedom received the same evaluation as the last list under President Obama — good but not good enough.

The U.S. State Department announced Jan. 4 the re-designation of the same "Countries of Particular Concern" (CPCs) that were released in April 2016 by the Obama administration. U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson kept Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan on the list, according to a department spokesperson.

Most of the CPCs on the latest list have been longtime members. Burma, China, Iran, and Sudan have been on the list since the first CPCs were named in 1999. The State Department added North Korea in 2001.

Religious liberty advocates had hoped the State Department would add other countries to the CPC list, a list required by federal law. The law

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Mighty quiet

One important lesson I learned as the father of young children was when they got quiet all of a sudden, I'd best go check on what they were up to. That unscientific observation is in no way meant to demean the members of the Mississippi Legislature currently in session at the New Capitol in Jackson, but isn't it peculiar that public discussion about a state lottery — the hottest issue around in recent legislative sessions — has trickled to almost nothing?

Except for the pledge announced by Rep. Philip Moran (R-Kiln) to file a lottery bill during this session, little more than a peep has been heard. Legislators in prior years who could be classified without argument as diehard lottery proponents seem to have lost their voices.

Even Mississippi's gambling governor, Phil Bryant, didn't bring it up in his State of the State address this year after making it a high priority in the past.

What gives? Could it be that our representatives and senators have finally listened to the will of the people and abandoned their shamefully underhanded efforts to legalize one of the most addictive forms of gambling, responsible for the ruination of so many lives and families elsewhere?

Perhaps the lottery's casino cousins have made it clear they will not tolerate a competing gambling option, and have threatened to pull up stakes and leave like they did after Hurricane Katrina when they wanted to creep onshore. (That threat was a joke then and is joke now, but then-Gov. Haley Barbour, a Republican, and the legislature at the time swallowed it hook, line, and sinker.)

As they have proven with their pet issues in the past, the gambling/political complex in Mississippi has the power to accomplish that if they want it, without question.

Maybe it was the mom-and-pop supermarkets and locally-owned convenience stores, where people come in for milk and bread but purchase low-margin lottery tickets instead. Those small town business anchors have expressed their opposition.

Did legislators finally listen to the pleas of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission and other religious groups fighting against the human toll wrought by the lottery? Nah, that's probably the least likely explanation of all.

One thing's for sure, though. When politicians are this unnaturally quiet on an issue as momentous as a lottery, we'd better check on them. See contact information below. In the meantime, consider this fact about the recent half-billion-dollar Powerball Lottery as presented by CNN cable news network.

The odds of buying the two-dollar winning ticket for that Powerball jackpot was one in over 292,000,000. Since the population of the United States currently stands at about 325,000,000, nearly every person in the country could have held one of those Powerball tickets and been as likely to win as you would.

Also, the odds of being struck by lightning are only one in 165,000. The odds of giving birth to conjoined twins are one in 200,000, and one in 11.5 million that you will be attacked by a shark.

Those numbers mean that you would be incredibly more likely to experience having two separate children that share one body or to see your leg swimming away from you in a shark's mouth — and you'd better be constantly looking skyward, too.

Contact your legislator and the Governor's Office and ask them what's going on with the silence over the lottery. Express your unalterable opposition to the lottery while you're at it. Make sure legislators know you will be monitoring their votes at every step of the way, if the lottery does indeed start to move through the Legislature (and won't that be a surprise?).

The address for legislators while in session is P.O. Box 1018, Jackson, MS 39215-1018. Individual e-mail addresses can be accessed at legislature.ms.gov. The telephone number for legislators while they are in session is (601) 359-3770.

Lottie, Lily Anne, and Glory to God

Guest opinion

with Chaise Herrington

In recent months, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions has taken on a new significance in our home. My wife and I wrestled for days with how to teach our children about our denomination's emphasis on international missions. Through our research, we discovered an audio version of Lottie Moon's life story. As we learned the amazing story of a woman who gave herself away for God's glory among the Chinese people, my three-year old daughter Lily Anne expressed concern for the hopeless spiritual condition of people living without Christ in other countries. She even determined that she needed to "give a bunch of money" to send the Gospel to the nations. My wife responded, "But you don't have a job! How will you raise the money?" Her solution was to sell Lottie Moon Christmas Cookies.

While in China, Lottie Moon experienced prejudice and suspicion from the people she had gone to serve. In order to reach Chinese women and children, Lottie baked her family's cookie recipe. A simple Google search revealed that her recipe is still widely accessible today. Upon discovering this, my wife and daughter devised a plan to sell cookies shaped like snowmen, trees, crosses, and other symbols of the season for five dollars per dozen. We expected to raise between fifty and one hundred dollars. However, as orders came in from our fellow church members, our family, and friends, we began to realize that this project had taken on a life of its own. Despite our shamefully low expectations, I was privileged to stand beside Lily as she presented a check to our church for \$415.51, the result of baking nearly fifty dozen cookies.

Obviously, I am extremely proud of my daughter. Such awareness of spiritual realities, compassion for others, and willingness to labor for an important cause are commendable, especially for a three-year-old. I also feel blessed to have a wife who is raising our children to value things that will matter in eternity. I also am overwhelmed by the support and gen-



DAD AND LILY ANNE

erosity of our church family, who rallied around Lily in this endeavor.

Through this whole experience, however, it has been my Heavenly Father who has astounded me the most. We serve a God who created us for His pleasure, and who desires for His Name to spread to every corner of the globe. Despite our sin, He pursues us with an undeserved, unquenchable love. Furthermore, in an act of unmerited favor, we who were once the objects of God's rescue mission have now become its agents. As members of God's family, we now have the privilege of carrying the message of our Father's forgiveness and grace to a world that desperately needs to hear it. My daughter's efforts have made an indelible impact on me and

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Send changes of address to: The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

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VOLUME 142 • NUMBER 3 • ISSN-0005-5778
Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$11.99 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items — one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing.

GuideStone sells headquarters ahead of relocation

DALLAS (BP) — Southern Baptist entity GuideStone Financial Resources plans to relocate in late summer 2018 to 115,000 square feet of new leased offices about 10 miles north of its current facility in Dallas.

GuideStone's current headquarters building in the Uptown district has been sold, but will be leased back until the move can be completed. The proceeds from the sale will continue to drive the benefit programs for Southern Baptists and others the agency is authorized to serve as part of GuideStone's ministry assignment with the Southern Baptist Convention.

The sale and relocation are forecast to provide cost savings of three million dollars annually as GuideStone sheds unused office space and moves to a more cost-effective location. The new location, Hawkins noted, will help the ministry as it strives to keep costs in line for the benefit of its participants.

The move to Pinnacle Tower in the North Dallas area will occur as GuideStone celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2018. Previously known as the Annuity Board, GuideStone has been based in Dallas since its founding in 1918.

"The move is part of our Vision 20/20 and GuideStone 100 long-range strategic plans," GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins said. "Part of our commitment in our strategic plan is to aggressively manage costs to remain competitive for the benefit of our participants."

The relocation is one of "many changes, along with technology solutions and headcount reductions, that we've made over the last three years to help us achieve our long-range goals," Hawkins explained. "As we seek to earn our participants' confidence every day, we sought to make aggressive cost savings that will allow us to remain competitive today and into the future."

The new office space will mark GuideStone's 13th home in Dallas, and will be only the second move in a generation. The move is expected to help GuideStone leverage new technology as it prepares to enter a second century of service to its 250,000 participants.

"We have focused on fostering collaboration, innovation, and efficiency across our organization so that we can constantly improve service to our participants," Hawkins said. "This new workplace will deploy technology solutions that will help keep us ahead of the curve."

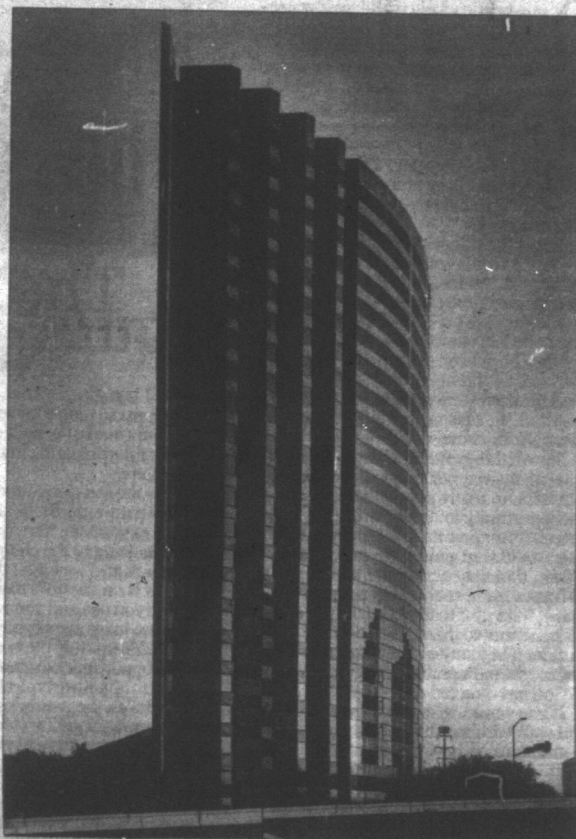
GuideStone has always given priority to our superior customer service, and technology plays a major role in helping us serve others to this end and work more efficiently. Our new office space and increasing technological support offer us additional capacity to continue to anticipate and exceed our participants' and employees' needs while maintaining our personal high touch approach to customer service.

The move takes advantage of the current positive real estate market in Dallas' Uptown region. John R. Jones, chief operating officer of GuideStone, said "as technology automates more of our processes, we simply need less room to accomplish even more tasks, so we felt like this time, with Uptown's renaissance continuing, was optimal for us to consider how best to prepare, from a space perspective, for the future."

The new location sits within a 45-minute commute of nearly 67% of workers in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, Jones said, making a smart move for recruiting talent to serve participants both today and in the future.

"As the Metroplex continues to migrate north, we wanted a location that was easily accessible to today's workforce and tomorrow's as well," Jones said. "We will be at the very center of the Dallas region for workers as we seek to recruit and retain high-caliber, best-in-class workers to serve our participants."

Hawkins said, "We believe this move will set the stage for GuideStone to begin our second century of service with the physical and technological resources that will ensure our ability to achieve our vision of honoring the Lord by being a lifelong partner with our participants in enhancing their financial security."



PINNACLE TOWER

Court strikes city ordinance aimed at pro-life centers

WASHINGTON (BP) — A Baltimore pro-life pregnancy help center has gained another court victory over the city's attempt to require it to communicate government-mandated information to women seeking the center's assistance.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in Richmond, Va., ruled Jan. 5 that a Baltimore ordinance violates the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment free-speech clause by ordering pro-life centers to display signs that announce they do not provide abortions or contraceptives or make referrals for the services.

In its unanimous opinion, a three-judge panel of the Fourth Circuit described as "particularly troubling" that the ordinance "compels speech from pro-life pregnancy centers, but not other pregnancy clinics that offer or refer for abortion."

"This is a positive ruling for a culture of life," Daniel Darling, vice president for communications at the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nash-

"The dangers of compelled speech in an area as ideologically sensitive and spiritually fraught as this one require that the government not overplay its hand."

Fourth Circuit ruling

ville, told Baptist Press in written comments. "Pregnancy centers are at the forefront of the fight for life, providing compassionate, loving care to women in crisis."

The ERLC aids Gospel-focused pregnancy centers through its Psalm 139 Project, which provides funds to purchase and place ultrasound machines in such centers.

In a written statement, Mark Rienzi, senior counsel at Becket Law which represented the center that filed the lawsuit, said the opinion "confirms that government has no place mandating speech — especially speech associated with deeply-held

religious beliefs." The [Greater Baltimore Center for Pregnancy Concerns] can now continue helping women in need without the government telling them how to talk about abortion."

The Baltimore ordinance was believed to be the first of its kind in an American city when it was approved in 2009, but other jurisdictions have enacted similar mandates since then. One such requirement is before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The justices announced in November they would rule on a 2015 California law that requires pro-life pregnancy centers to notify their clients of the availability of abortion services elsewhere. It appears oral arguments will be in March or April, with a ruling expected before the court adjourns in late June or early July.

The states of Hawaii and Illinois have adopted laws similar to California's, and some cities have approved signage ordinances comparable to Baltimore's measure. Courts have invalidated all or most of such mandates in not only Balti-

more but Austin, Texas; Montgomery County, Md.; and New York City.

The laws are part of an ongoing effort by abortion-rights advocates and their lawmaking allies to limit the impact of pro-life centers that provide free services to pregnant women. With the aid of ultrasound machines that demonstrate the humanity of the unborn child, pro-life centers are helping women to choose life for their babies.

The centers' services also include medical consultations, baby clothing and diapers, job training, mentoring programs, post-abortion counseling, and prenatal and parenting classes. Abortion clinics typically do not provide many of these services.

In the Fourth Circuit decision, the panel said it does "not begrudge the City its viewpoint. But neither may the City disfavor only those who disagree."

"The dangers of compelled speech in an area as ideologically sensitive and spiritually fraught as this one require that the government not overplay its

hand," according to the ruling.

"After seven years of litigation and a 1,295-page record before us, the City does not identify a single example of a woman who entered the Greater Baltimore Center's waiting room under the misimpression that she could obtain an abortion there."

Carol Crews, the center's executive director, said in a written release, "We are committed to serving women in need in a way that respects their choices, comforts them in a difficult time and is in line with our mission. This court ruling means that we can do our job and the government can't tell us what to say or how to say it."

The Fourth Circuit has considered the case three times. It first affirmed a federal judge's 2011 summary judgment ruling that the ordinance violates freedom of speech. In 2013, however, the entire Fourth Circuit panel vacated the judgment and remanded it to federal court where a judge again ruled the ordinance infringed free speech.

At the end of 2017, the whole country, maybe the whole world, was watching as the House and the Senate finally came to agreement to pass a new tax law that would affect most of us across America. While I have not seen anything but excerpts of the law, supposedly during this 2018 year most Americans who are paying taxes will get a reduction in the amount of taxes they pay. From what I read and what I have seen, it appears to be a good thing to help most of the working folks in America.

One of the things that happens in the new law is a different way of providing for deductions. An individual or a couple will get a far greater deduction at the very outset and they are probably not going to be able to deduct charitable contributions unless they have been extremely high. With that said, we did not even get into the year 2018 until people were asking me, "How do you think the new tax law is going to affect giving in our churches?"

For what they were asking me, I do not have an answer, but they were assuming that because many people would not have the opportunity to deduct their gifts to the church from their taxable income, that they would stop giving. Because of the offsets, that may or may not take place. It did cause me to realize that some, if not many, folks give to the Lord only because it's beneficial to them. It also caused me to wonder if in many of our churches we have not taught the significance of stewardship as God has directed us.

If you would, take just a few minutes and walk with me through some biblical instructions on how we are to give to the Lord. In Leviticus 27:30 the Scripture says, "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord." The tithe is the Lord's. When God began to instruct His people to tithe, there was no tax structure as such. They were to give to



The Tithe and the New Tax Law

the Lord, not to reap a benefit of paying less taxes or any kind of benefit other than the blessing of participating in the work of God by their gifts.

One of the sad things about most of our giving is that we think about that tithe, that 10% of what we have received in the paycheck, going to the church, going to the Lord's work and we forget that the greater emphasis is on the 90% that God says you keep and you use and you bless your family and you take care of your needs. With the 90%, He lavishly blesses us and He gives us opportunity to share in His work with the 10%, yet we typically focus on the awkwardness, the painfulness, the burdensomeness, of giving 10% to the Lord. He didn't say you have to give 50/50. He didn't say you had to give 25%, but oh, what a blessing to give to Him the tithe knowing that He entrusts to us the 90% to bless us, to bless our families, to bless the needs in our lives.

Take a moment and look at the 90% and it may help you to see how significant

it is for you to participate with the 10%. We are under command and mandate from God to give of the tithe while enjoying the benefits and blessings of the 90%, we give the 10%. The truth, the unchanging, emphatic truth is that the tithe is the Lord's. If you keep it, it is still the Lord's. If you use it for your benefit, it still is the Lord's. That is reason why in Malachi 3:8, the Scripture asks the question from God, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."

If you take something that belongs to someone else and keep it for yourself, that is robbery. As significant as that may be and as awkward as it may look and as sad as it may shock us, the tithe is the Lord's. If you keep it, you are robbing Him. Truthfully, if you don't tithe, you don't only rob God, you rob yourself. It was Jesus who said in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." If you don't give and you don't tithe, you are robbing yourself of joy.

Why does God want us to give? He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He has everything. It is His. Why do you think He wants us to tithe? It's for our benefit, for our blessing, that we have the wonderful privilege of entering into Kingdom work through His church, through His servants, through all that goes forth in the name of Christ and the joy of all those glorious ministries, activities, and missions are ours because we participated. When you tithe, you are actually giving to God. You are benefiting His work. You are partnering with Him to touch this world for Christ. You will reap the joys of the blessing of giving.

An additional benefit that comes from giving is the fact that giving, gracious generosity, is the only way to overcome greediness. As you give, something is triggered in your life that creates a different dynamic of heart and spirit. The more you hold on just for your own self-use and benefit, the greedier you become. In fact, the more you give graciously, the more generous you become. It is amazing, but it is true.

Perhaps getting a tax break is the reason you've been giving to the Lord. The withdrawal of that tax break will probably keep you from giving, but if you've been giving to the Lord out of a heart of thanksgiving and grace, there is probably little to nothing that could ever stop you from experiencing the joy of being a blessing and giving as God has poured out blessings in His giving to you.

I've had people ask me about how that is going to affect giving. I do confess that I don't know, but isn't it strange that in our tax code we might be put in a position to have more money. In receiving more, we question whether we should give more. The Lord is deserving of all that we have and certainly all that we give to His glory.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

College News



▲ Ronald Meeks, professor of Biblical Studies at **BLUE MOUNTAIN COLLEGE**, has been named the recipient of the Jim Futral-Professorship of Biblical Studies and Proclamation. Established in 2016, the endowed position is held by a faculty member who teaches in the BMC Department of Biblical Studies and serves as mentor to students called to preach and proclaim God's Word. Meeks, pictured with BMC president Barbara McMillin, is a 1983 graduate of BMC and has served as a member of the BMC faculty since 1996. He is also the director of church relations and ministerial recruiting.

► Alpha Lambda Delta, the national honor society recognizing academic and leadership achievements of first-year students, became the ninth honor society to be installed at **BLUE MOUNTAIN COLLEGE**. Sixteen BMC students were initiated, as well as four honorary members from the BMC faculty and staff. Pictured are (front from left) Johnny L. Mattox, Barbara McMillin, Sharon Enzor, Mallory Wooldridge, Hailey Horne, Faith Walgenbach, Taylor Collins, Susan Huffman, (second from left) Luke Bennett, Abigail Mattox, Taylor Smith, Jake Heffner, (fourth from left) Harrison Moss, Jacob Derrick, Ed Bender, Will Bain, (back from left) Dalton Tudor and Noah Hill.



► Thanks to the financial and personal investment of Kenny Digby, **BLUE MOUNTAIN COLLEGE** class of 1974, and James Howell, BMC class of 1991, Jacob Girley, a junior at BMC, was awarded the first "Christ for the Crisis Scholarship." The "Christ for the Crisis Scholarship" was established in 2016 by Kenny Digby and his brother Danny as a lasting investment in the spread of the gospel and honoring the memory of three members of the Digby family. Eugene Digby was a minister for six decades serving pastorates in North Mississippi and Alabama. He was perhaps best known for the "Christ for the Crisis" radio and television ministry. Faye Ellen Digby was Digby's wife and the mother of Danny and Kenny Digby. Austin Digby was the son of Kenny and Becky Digby who died in 2014 as the result of an automobile mishap. Pictured (l to r) are Jody Hill, director of development at BMC; Ronald Meeks, professor of Biblical Studies; Becky and Kenny Digby, donors; Jacob Girley, scholarship recipient; James Howell, pastor; Danny Digby, donor; Barbara McMillin, president.



Sports Gambling is No Fantasy

This past year the Legislature passed House Bill 967 — the Fantasy Sports Bill. HB 967 was intended to regulate the typical fantasy sports leagues on internet, social media, or in a work-place office. A participant drafts an imaginary team (hence "fantasy") of real players, as in the NFL, and their individual statistics determine which fantasy team wins or loses. The fantasy league can be just for fun, or there can be monetary prizes from the entry fees. Good, bad, or ugly, this is what HB 967 was supposed to pertain to. This is what many of our senators and representatives thought they were voting on — Fantasy Sports.

But, when HB 967 came out of the Conference Committee (joint committee of representatives and senators who must harmonize the bills from both chambers), a "grandfather clause" had been added into the final bill. Any change in conference is underlined when the bill goes back to both chambers. I would encourage our legislators to double check bills out of the Conference Committee for underlined changes. The "grandfather clause" added to HB 967 was clearly underlined.

This "grandfather clause" states that any prior scheme of gambling

in Mississippi would become legal. Years ago, on a casino ship in the bay, there was a sports bookie on ship to take bets on college and professional games (not fantasy, but the real deal). The sports bookie was on ship to take bets from only the employees of the ship, not the customers.

The gambling forces in our state have taken this "grandfather clause" and the prior scheme of gambling (that I just described) to court. They argue that gambling on college and professional games (football, basketball, etc.) should be legal in Mississippi because of HB 967. It appears that the courts may agree with the gambling forces and allow customers in casinos to make bets on real games, not fantasy.

Four casinos have already applied for permits to open sports gambling on college and professional games. Can you imagine the chaos and corruption among coaches, players,

and referees and umpires this would cause? Can you imagine a college player right out of high school being offered a car, money, or whatever to throw a game or shave points? Does Black Sox Scandal ring a bell? Why is Pete Rose (arguably the best player in baseball) prohibited from being in the Hall of Fame?

If the courts agree with the gambling forces and allow sports gambling, Mississippi would join Las Vegas as the ONLY place where SPORTS GAMBLING is legal.

Do you remember the story of the Trojan Horse? The enemy, who could not overcome the walls of Troy, built a huge horse and filled it with soldiers. The naïve people of Troy opened the gates and pulled the Trojan Horse into the city — it would be a "gift" to their gods. Under the cover of darkness, the enemy soldiers came out of the horse, opened the gates to their army, and sacked

and burned Troy. The GRANDFATHER CLAUSE in HB 967 is a Trojan Horse that will open the flood gate to SPORTS GAMBLING. This is not Fantasy; this is a serious threat to our STATE. Remove this clause from HB 967, and there is no court case to allow sports gambling.

One might ask, "With our plate full dealing with the lottery, why deal with sports gambling?" Because both schemes of gambling will harm our society in the short term and long run. You can get two for the price of one. When you call, text, email or tweet the Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House, and your senator and representative, you can help kill two birds with one stone.

Ask them to remove the Grandfather Clause from HB 967 and ask them to say NO to the lottery. Call the Capitol at 601-359-3770 (during the session only.)

We need you to stand up and speak up.

Digby is executive director-treasurer of the Christian Action Commission. He can be reached at (601) 292-3329/office, (662) 284-9163/cell, or by e-mail at kdigby@christianaction.com.

First Person: It never was about the building, anyway

By Jimmy Draper
Correspondent

It is rare for any of us to have buildings named after us. It is even more rare for us to observe the destruction of those buildings, but it happens. In fact, it just did in Nashville when Draper Tower on the former LifeWay Christian Resources campus was reduced to rubble in a few seconds on Jan. 6.



DRAPER

Ever since receiving a call a couple months ago that the building would be imploded, I've long thought about the event. God reminded me that Jesus is the great cornerstone of our faith and of LifeWay. Biblically, the cornerstone was selected with care, laid with great ceremony, and the stone itself determined the lines of the architecture of the building.

The Apostle Peter reminds us that believers have come to Christ, who is "a living stone" and that we have become "living stones" in a great spiritual

sanctuary (1 Peter 2:4-10). The apostle Paul reminds us that, "In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:19-22).

"Living stone" is a magnificent figure of speech (1 Peter 2:4). It appears to be a contradiction of language, as if we said, "cool fire, hot ice, bright darkness, dry water." We normally speak of someone as "stone dead." Yet the Bible calls Christ both our Stone or Rock and our Life.

He has the nature of a Great Stone: fixed foundation, fortress, solid, steadfast, strong, massive and immovable, but He is the living stone. In Him is vitality, life, energy, growth, and movement.

It has never been God's intention just to have a temple for His people but to have a people for His temple. Every believer is a temple, but every Christian temple becomes a living stone in that vast, eternal temple that God is building.

The living stones in the walls of the temple become the believer-priests offering sacrifices within the temple. We are not only the stones in

the wall. We are the priests in the temple (1 Peter 2:5). This concept dignifies every life and every aspect of each life. There is no job so low or position so prestigious that it is not dignified by this high calling. All can declare, "I am a living stone in the everlasting sanctuary that the Lord Jesus Christ is building."

Now, what does all this mean for those who have served in Draper Tower? That building was not LifeWay. It was simply one of the buildings on our campus where LifeWay served and ministered. I have walked those halls when they were empty, and in the loneliness of those moments I often thought deeply about what LifeWay is. When the buildings were empty, LifeWay was not there. The employees are LifeWay. Their passion, devotion, abilities, heart, expertise, service, and love for Him expressed through their service and love for others — that is LifeWay.

Have I been diminished by the removal of this building? Absolutely not! That building is not my legacy. The exceptional ministers employed by LifeWay are my legacy. With-

out them I have no legacy.

Some wonderful things occurred within those walls. However, that building never helped a church in its ministry nor any person in their devotion to the Lord.

It never designed a budget or a building for a church, nor provided a single piece of Bible study curriculum or a single piece of discipleship material.

It never provided retreats or conferences to strengthen church leaders, nor provided guidance for any young person in their walk with Christ.

It never printed any books to promote maturity among believers, nor provided materials scrutinized for the inventory for LifeWay Christian Stores.

It never wrote a song nor provided choir arrangements for our churches, nor addressed any of the significant challenges facing the church in this godless world.

It never won a single soul to faith in Christ.

The people who served in LifeWay's buildings have done all that and infinitely more. Individuals come and go, but all who serve or have served at

LifeWay comprise its essence and strength. The stones, steel, and mortar of that building were lifeless materials. The only thing that made that building sacred and distinct from other buildings is the extraordinary people who ministered there and still do in another place.

When I moved back to Texas after leaving LifeWay, I did not cease to be who I am. I simply relocated to another place. LifeWay is the same. LifeWay still lives and ministers because those phenomenal people are LifeWay. Those of us who have been privileged to serve as the face of LifeWay for a season could not have done it without them.

They will always be LifeWay Christian Resources wherever they are!

Draper was president of LifeWay Christian Resources from 1991 until his retirement in 2006. LifeWay sold its Nashville property last year and relocated to a new facility also in the downtown area. Draper's commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style and clarity.

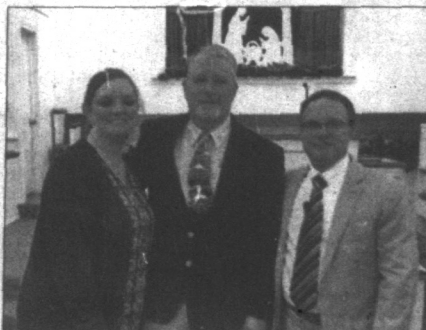
Just for the Record



Joyful Noise, the senior choir group from **FIRST CHURCH, FLORA**, traveled to sing Christmas carols to the residents of Madison County Nursing Home in Canton and the VA Nursing Home in Jackson on Dec. 14.



CENTER CHURCH, ATTALA COUNTY, recognized Bennie Adams for his years of service as deacon. Shown are Tommie Jean Adams, Adams, and pastor Jeffery Hutchison.



EAST COLUMBIA CHURCH, COLUMBIA, recently ordained Jimmy Miller as deacon. Shown are Amanda Miller, Miller, and pastor Tim Morrison.



BASSFIELD CHURCH, BASSFIELD, presented their cantata, Hope Has Hands, Dec. 17 during the morning service.



LIBERTY HILL, POPE, honored pastor Derrick Simmons with a monetary gift for pastor appreciation. Shown are Simmons and Roger Crosswhite.



Terry Edwards and his wife Pat were honored for their 15 years of service at **CENTER HILL CHURCH, HAMILTON**.



The children of **UNITY CHURCH, LEAKESVILLE**, collected change to purchase live animals to be given to families in impoverished countries. The children collected \$1623.70.

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Just for the Record



CALHOUN CHURCH, HOT COFFEE, recently presented the cantata, *O Holy Night* by Russell Mauldin under the direction of George Hensarling and narrated by pastor Daryl Coats.



The children's choir of **CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO**, performed the Christmas musical *Hooray for Baby Jesus*. Danny Creel, minister of music.



The children's ministry of **FIRST CHURCH, BOONEVILLE**, took up a special Lottie Moon Christmas Offering in December. Maggie Ray Yarber (left) baked 35 dozen cookies to honor Moon's legacy and raised \$600. The children's ministry as a whole raised \$929 for the offering. Also shown is Nancy Nanney portraying Moon.



IMMANUEL CHURCH, GREENWOOD, ordained Bobby Box as deacon Dec. 3, 2017. He is shown with his niece, Katie High (left), his wife Barbara, and son Drew.

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FIRST CHURCH, WIGGINS, presented their Bethlehem program.



FIRST CHURCH, VICKSBURG, held a deacon ordination Dec. 10. Shown are Cooper and Heather Lee, Justin and Bonnie Henry, and Bobby and Catherine McComas along with pastor Matt Buckles.

Mistaken missile message doesn't shake Christians

HONOLULU (BP) — Praying, sharing the Gospel, and contacting loved ones were Hawaii Baptists' reactions when a Jan. 13 alert message informed them a ballistic missile could strike them within minutes.

Shortly after 8 a.m. local time, the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency sent an alert to cell phones on the islands stating, "Ballistic missile threat inbound to Hawaii. Seek immediate shelter. This is not a drill."

A television banner added, "A missile may impact on land or sea within minutes."

State government officials revoked the alert after 38 minutes, according to media reports, and later said the message went out because of human error. Amid heightened tension between the U.S. and North Korea over the communist dictatorship's nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, some Hawaiians and tourists thought their lives could end within the hour.

When students living in dormitories at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu became aware of the alert, many went to the nearby house of Baptist Collegiate Ministries (BCM) director Arjay Gruspe. He led them to take shelter in the BCM offices, which are partially underground, until the all-clear was given.

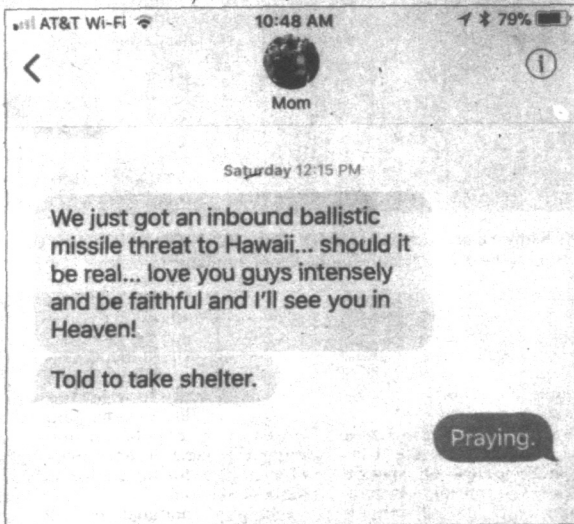
BCM associate director John Allison told Baptist Press (BP) his first thought was to call his parents in Oklahoma. Then he thought of a Japanese friend who had agreed the previous day to start studying the Bible but had not received Christ as Lord and Savior.

"I was praying, 'Lord, don't let [him] die so he can still hear about Jesus,'" Allison said. "I had shared the Gospel with him before, but [the missile threat] made it so immediately real."

Craig Webb, assistant executive director of the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention (HPBC), had just finished washing his car when a neighbor relayed the alert. Webb called the family of an HPBC colleague, who was out of the state, to check on them and pray with them.

He said he felt a peace and "didn't realize until later how upset everybody else was."

Hiking with international students later that day, Webb used his experience to give a Gospel witness. "I shared with them my experience about the peace I had, knowing that should we really be vaporized or killed somehow, because of the blood Jesus shed and by receiving the free gift of His



FAREWELL FALSE ALARM — Tanya York, vacationing in Hawaii when a missile attack false alarm occurred Jan. 13, texted a potential goodbye message to her sons and their families. She was in Hawaii with her husband, Southern Seminary professor Hershael York, and his mother. (BP photo)

"It has given us a cool way of being able to talk about, 'What would have happened to you if you were in the impact zone and you died?' Everybody is talking about it so in the course of the discussion, it gives us a way of bringing Christ up."

Andrew Large

pastor of Waikiki Church

salvation, we would spend eternity with Him."

Andrew Large, pastor of Waikiki Church in Honolulu, told BP he had an intuition shortly after receiving the alert that it could be a false alarm. When church members contacted him for counsel, he told them to stay where they were rather than rushing to what they perceived as safer locations.

One Waikiki Church member was on the phone with her sister on the mainland after the alert sounded. When the call dropped, her sister feared she had been killed, Large said. However, they reconnected minutes later.

Large plans to use the false alarm as an evangelistic opportunity in the days ahead. "It has given us a cool way of being able to talk about, 'What would have happened to you

if you were in the impact zone and you died?' Everybody is talking about it so in the course of the discussion, it gives us a way of bringing Christ up."

Kentucky pastor and Southern Seminary professor Hershael York was vacationing with his wife and 85-year-old mother on the Big Island when the alert came.

"Each of us responded to it differently," York, pastor of Buck Run Church in Frankfort, Ky., told BP via email. "My mother just kept putting on her makeup, less concerned than if she had received notice that it might rain."

York reasoned through what might happen in the coming minutes with "complete confidence in the Lord that He would be with us no matter what."

York's wife Tanya also "had an incredible calm and serenity, but it occurred to her that in a matter of moments we might see Jesus," York said, so she sent a text message to their sons and their sons' families stating, "We just got an inbound ballistic missile threat to Hawaii ... should it be real ... love you guys intensely and be faithful and I'll see you in Heaven!"

Allison said he wanted to contact many loved ones during the moments he thought could be his last but didn't have time. "It made me realize that I want to be telling people I care about them and love them every day."

BIBL i O C I P H E R

S RPTE ASJI CTYXH, TPP AV EVSEPV;

HOSJG JYGS LSX DNGO GOV FSNRV SW

GINJZEO.

EHTPZH WSIGA-HVFPVY: SYV

Clue: V = E

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John 10:28

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SBC

cont. from p. 1

heart of who Southern Baptists are," Gaines stressed. "However, as research from [New Orleans Seminary President] Chuck Kelly has shown, our baptisms are the lowest we have seen in 70 years.

"If we want to see that trend turn around, we must refocus our efforts on evangelism, telling a lost world about the hope that is found only in Jesus Christ."

To accomplish the goal, Gaines said, Southern Baptists must be willing to go where God commands, stand for Gospel truth amid conflicting cultural trends, and audibly speak the Gospel to the world.

"As my former evangelism professor Roy Fish always said, 'You can't serve Jesus with a zipped lip,'" Gaines told BP. "It is our prayer that Southern Baptists will be challenged to boldly testify of the work that Christ has done for us."

Attending the meeting will offer spiritual and practical benefits, said Gaines, who completes his second year as

"It is our prayer that Southern Baptists will be challenged to boldly testify of the work that Christ has done for us."

Steve Gaines

SBC President

SBC president in June and is not eligible for reelection.

"The cross at the center of the logo is meant to signify what we are testifying about. Our testimony is important but at the end of the day, we need to preach 'Jesus Christ, and Him crucified,'" he noted, referencing 1 Cor. 2:2.

"As we meet we will conduct business and hear from each of our entities, but most importantly we are going to come together to cry out to the Lord," Gaines said. "Our country needs a spiritual awakening, and if we humble ourselves, pray, seek His face, and turn from our sins, God will hear us and will forgive our sin and heal our land."

Additional annual meeting details are available at sbcannualmeeting.net. The agenda has not been released.

LIST

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calls for the designation of countries that commit or tolerate "systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom."

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), a bipartisan panel that monitors religious liberty overseas, had urged the State Department in April to re-designate the 10 CPC members of 2016 but recommended the addition of six others: Central African Republic, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Syria, and Vietnam.

The USCIRF recommendation of the six additional countries did not receive any action.

"Although USCIRF agrees with the 10 countries on the State Department's list, it does not go far enough," said USCIRF Chairman Daniel Mark in a written statement.

Mark and Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) pointed to the CPC list's shortcomings on specific countries. The refusal to include Vietnam, an officially atheist, communist country in Southeast Asia, is "a significant omission," Smith said in a written release.

Mark said, "Pakistan continues to harass its religious mi-

norities, has state-sanctioned discrimination against groups such as the Ahmadis, and tolerates extra-judicial violence in the guise of opposing blasphemy. Given the strong stance that President Trump has taken on Pakistan recently, the failure to designate Pakistan as a CPC this year comes as a surprise and disappointment."

However, Pakistan did receive a measure of censure from Tillerson, who named the 95% Muslim country as the only member of a new "special watch list" established in a 2016 law. The list is for governments that participate in or permit severe violations of religious liberty that may not rise to the level of CPC status.

Smith and another religious freedom champion in Congress — Sen. James Lankford (R-Ok.), a Southern Baptist — used the release of the CPC list as an opportunity to urge confirmation of Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback, a Republican and former U.S. senator, as ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom.

Trump's nomination of Brownback, a strong religious liberty advocate during his 17 years in Congress, languished in the Senate during the president's first year in office and he must be

re-nominated this year to gain approval for the post.

The CPC announcement is "further proof why we need a strong diplomatic advocate in the State Department working to protect and advance religious freedom abroad," said Lankford, who called on the Senate to confirm Brownback "without delay."

The Trump administration "should use all the tools available to protect this fundamental freedom, including by pushing the Senate to finally confirm" Brownback, Smith said. "[T]he post has been vacant for too long."

So far, Tillerson has declined to name any groups as "Entities of Particular Concern" (EPCs), a category created by law in 2016 for non-state organizations that use violence against people of faith. In April, USCIRF urged the designation of three Muslim terrorist groups — the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Taliban in Afghanistan, and al-Shabaab in Somalia — as EPCs.

USCIRF, which is made up of nine commissioners selected by the president and congressional leaders, tracks the status of religious liberty worldwide and issues reports to Congress, the president and the State Department.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEg format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

GIFTS

cont. from p. 1

IMB President David Platt voiced gratitude to each person "who has given to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering during this concerted season of giving and to each person who has prayed for our international missionaries during this concerted season of praying."

"I also want to thank each church leader who has partnered with IMB to facilitate these avenues for your members to pray, give, go, and send.

May we continue to be faithful with the blessings God has given us that we might, in turn, be a blessing to others."

The IMB partners with more than 47,000 churches which work together to spread the Gospel around the world among billions of people who have never heard it. The primary way this is accomplished is through the coalition of Southern Baptist churches sending and supporting thousands of missionaries.

Support for the personnel comes through Southern Baptists' gifts to the Lottie Moon

Christmas Offering and the Cooperative Program.

Missionaries such as John McPherson, who has served 33 years in Africa, note their reliance on Southern Baptists' LMCO gifts and their appreciation for Southern Baptists' faithfulness in giving. Much of McPherson's ministry in theological education is an example of Lottie Moon dollars at work, he recently told the Baptist and Reflector news journal of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

To view additional examples about how LMCO gifts are used, visit imb.org/lmco.

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Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

DECEMBER 1-15

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Mr. & Mrs. Barney J. Albritton
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DECEMBER 16-31

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BCV EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.

Value All • Acts 16:16-19: Ps. 139:13-16

This Sunday is *Sanctity of Life* Sunday. So, what does that mean to us? For most who have lived since 1973, it means a fight against abortion or the killing of pre-born babies. While this is a cause worth contending for, I wonder if we have focused so much on that particular battle that we have forgotten that Sanctity of Life is for all stages and ages? I have a ministry friend who points out that we are loud when it comes to anti-abortion rants but are amazingly silent when it comes to taking care of the life once it is born. Sanctity of Life's real question is, "What will we, the church, do with lives outside of the womb?"

Today's scripture deals with a young girl who was able to prophesize and was being used by an unscrupulous man to get rich. As I read this, I thought about our world and the trafficking of young people for the profit of a few. Doesn't this also fit into our definition of sanctity of life? I also think of drug addicted parents who neglect their children's need for food and safety in order to feed their own desires...are these children not covered in our definition of the lives we protect? I consider the elderly who are put away and forgotten for the convenience of their family. Then there

are those who are deemed worthless because of some physical or mental deficiency. Shouldn't these also fall under the definition of Sanctity?

If we believe that life is given by God and each has purpose and meaning, we must act. We must begin to see those who are used or ignored for selfish desires, as people of purpose. At first, Paul

heard this young girl's cries merely as an annoyance but when he actually stopped and looked at her, he saw someone crying out for help. When he really looked at her, he saw her true need. His annoyance turned to compassion as he realized there was a problem while those around saw nothing amiss.

As I wrote those last words, it became apparent to me, that I am much like Paul. All around are the cries for help, yet I am often only annoyed and carry on with my life. I do nothing, believ-

ing, perhaps, there is nothing I can do, but is that true? May I challenge us this new year to make a concerted effort to actually stop and look at others as Jesus would. Instead of seeing someone who is "in the way" perhaps we would see people as those God created for more than being used then thrown away.

When Paul really saw the girl, he took

action and it was not popular among the people. As a matter of fact, he angered many. His caring more for a person than profit resulted in a

severe beating and imprisonment. The reason? Paul's accusers said, "These men are seriously disturbing our city. They are Jews and are promoting customs that are not legal for us as Romans to adopt or practice." Acts 16:20-21 (CSB) Yes, Paul went against the customs of the times, but not because he wanted to change the customs but because he wanted to change this girl's life.

There...that is the point—looking at people as people and not as projects. When we see injustice, we should "disturb our cities." Yes, we can, and should, protest abortions, for they are acts of murder, but at the same time we must see with compassion the young woman who feels she has no other choice. We must see her, not as an annoyance but as someone who needs to be set free. We must also see the baby who is saved from this awful act as someone who needs a safe place to land so they can achieve their potential. We must see that disruptive child in our schools as one who needs to be seen and heard, for their cry is more than an annoyance. We must see our elderly, who are being thrown away as people who still have purpose.

Life is given by God and if we truly believe Psalm 139:16, "Your [God's] eyes saw me when I was formless; all my days were written in your book and planned before a single one of them began," (CSB) we will know and understand that sanctity of life is not just for the pre-born but for all life...beginning to the end.

Grace is a Bible teacher and conference speaker and is a member of First Church, Clinton.

I Am Wonderfully Made • Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

In the latter part of the 19th century, an important event took place in the U.S. District courtroom in Omaha, Nebraska. A man shared a few, simple words that still challenge the conscience of our great nation and expose those who wish to share the venom of bigotry and racism. His name was Chief Standing Bear of the Ponca Native American tribe. Chief Standing Bear was on trial for refusing to stay on the reservation the federal government had forced he and his family in which to live. The Chief was simply attempting to bury his eldest son at a location of his own choosing. His son died after succumbing to malaria and starvation. Chief Standing Bear was honoring his son's wishes, but by doing so, he broke the ludicrous law of leaving the reservation.

At his trial, Chief Standing Bear was given permission to speak. Among his words were, "That hand is not the color of yours, but if I prick it, the blood will flow, and I shall feel pain. The blood is of the same color as yours. God made me, and I am a man."

On May 12, 1879, Judge Elmer S. Dundy ruled that "an Indian is a person" within the meaning of habeas corpus. He stated that the federal government had failed to show a basis under law for the Poncas' arrest and captivity.

It was a landmark case, recognizing that an Indian is a "person" under the law and entitled to its rights and protection. The right of expatriation is a natural, inherent and inalienable right and extends to the Indian as well as to the more fortunate white race," the judge concluded.

Fast forward almost 90 years later to Memphis, Tennessee. The Sanitation Workers strike of 1968 was the result of its black employees being subjected to unfair wages, dangerous working conditions and no overtime pay. The 1,300 men on strike carried no guns, hurled no insults, and threatened no one. Their only "weapons" that day were words. Four, one-syllable words were printed in red ink on white poster boards that hung around their necks that read, "I Am A Man."

The workers that day in Memphis were over 600 miles and a few generations removed from the Omaha courtroom where Chief Standing Bear spoke

words in his defense. However, the invisible bond of personhood and the value of all people cannot be stymied by the passing of time or the borders of geography.

Our next six Bible study lessons together reflect a theme of "Made for Something More." The first lesson is a good refresher course on the value each person. With Psalm 139 as our guide, I sincerely hope you take the time to meditate, read and even jot down some insights from this beautiful Psalm. De-

servedly so, Christians have been passionate with their voices and commitments to combat abortion. Abortion has been

made a political issue for many. Abortion is not about a political party or platform; it is about life, ethics and even grace and forgiveness.

While it is safe to utilize these verse in the abortion discussion, do not neglect the other applications and this Psalm affords. Among some good talking points you may want to explore in

your group are: The omniscience of God (Psalm 139:1) The intimacy of God (Psalm 139:3). The protection of God (Psalm 139: 5). The intricate care and love the Father has for us even before our birth (Psalm 139:13,14). God's involvement and plans for my life before we are given a name by our parents (Psalm 139:16).

Our Father loves us deeply. Our Father loves us all deeply. Read those last two sentences again. The word "all" makes all the difference. I am proud to call myself pro-life, but it must not end when a baby is born. My love for all people must transcend beyond the diaper days. I must be willing to stand with the poor, be an advocate for those trapped in the evils of human trafficking, see the value of the person on death row and so on. How you treat someone who you think can do nothing for you in return reveals much about your own character, not theirs. If we say we are pro-life, let us remember Jesus Himself IS Life! To be pro-life is to be pro-Jesus and pro-showing love to everyone.

Will you make your stand for all of God's children that are fearfully and wonderfully made?

McKay is pastor of Harperville Church, Harperville.

Bible Studies for Life

with Bobby McKay



HERRINGTON

cont. from p.2

on so many others because they represent this gracious partnership into which God has invited His children. He has promised to take our little offering and,

like the boy's fish dinner, multiply it to the praise of His great Name (Matthew 14:13-21).

For those who take seriously God's call to carry his Gospel to a lost and dying world, the task may seem overwhelming. I invite believers to consider their missions involvement by

asking three simple questions

- Can I pray?
- Can I give?
- Can I go?

Not everyone who desires to further the mission of God can become a lifetime foreign missionary like Lottie Moon. Nevertheless, Lily's efforts show

that everyone can pray, and that even the youngest and the poorest of us can give to God's mission. Even with the end of the Lottie Moon emphasis, she continues collecting loose change in her "missions jar," preparing for her next offering. What would happen if we

had such confidence that God would use our feeble efforts? I truly believe that the world would be significantly impacted for God's glory.

Chaise Herrington is pastor of Big Creek Church, Waynesboro. Edited for style.

DNA find leads back to Tower of Babel dispersal

TANANA, Alaska (BP) — Ancient human genetic material from Alaska has been cited by two creation researchers as corroborating evidence of Scripture's claim that humans migrated en masse from the Tower of Babel.

A study published Jan. 3 in the journal *Nature* claims DNA extracted from the remains of an infant girl buried in central Alaska suggests an ancient migration of people from East Asia across a frozen land bridge to North America.

After scientists extracted the DNA, they dated it to approximately 11,500 years ago according to common evolutionary dating methods and discovered commonalities between the harvested genome and the DNA of modern Native Americans.

Researchers also found the ancient infant girl had ancestors in East Asia some 35,000 years ago according to evolutionary dating methods.

The finding marks the second oldest human genome ever discovered in North America, *The New York Times* reported.

Nathaniel Jeanson, a Harvard-trained research biologist with Answers in Genesis (AiG), told Baptist Press (BP) the dating of the Alaska DNA seems to be inaccurate but other details of the find corroborate the account in Genesis 11 of mass human migration following attempted construction of the Tower of Babel.

The *Nature* study is "more evidence for people in the

Americas from Asia — East Asia, Central Asia" and "is consistent with Scripture," Jeanson said.

The biblical book of Genesis reports that rather than heed God's command to "spread out over the earth" (Genesis 9:7), humans — who all spoke a single language at the time — settled in the Ancient Near Eastern land of Shinar and attempted to build "a tower with its top in the sky" (Genesis 11:4).

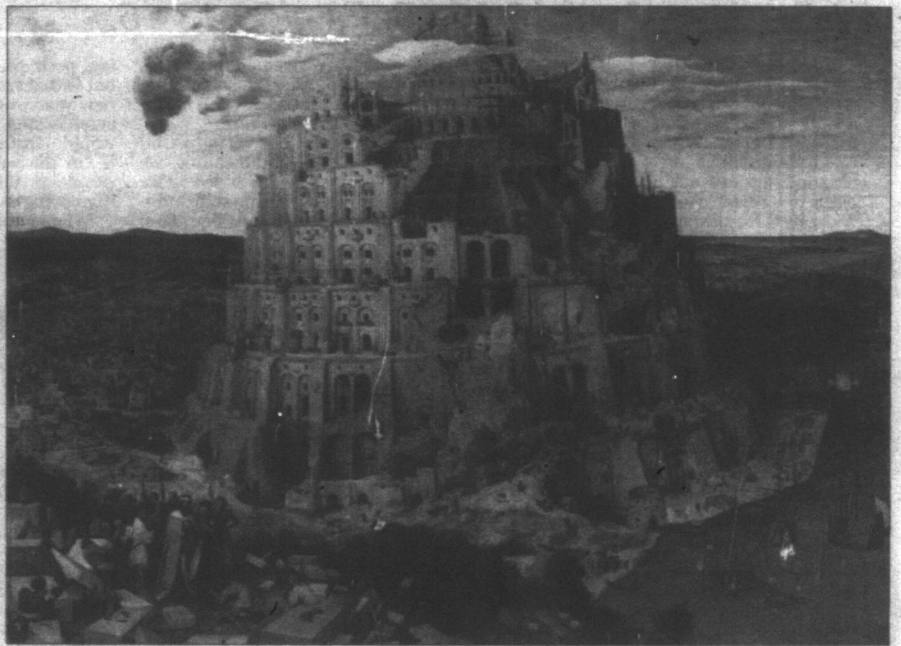
God frustrated their plans, caused the builders to begin speaking various languages, and "scattered them throughout the earth" (Genesis 11:8).

The Bible's chronology suggests those events occurred more recently than the 11,500-year date assigned by the *Nature* article, Jeanson said, discounting the evolutionary dating methods used by many secular scientists because they allegedly are inconsistent with one another and based on unverified assumptions.

"Based on genetic clocks that have been published even by evolutionists, you can explain the origin of all people groups genetically within the last few thousand years," he said.

Kurt Wise, a Southern Baptist and Harvard-trained paleontologist, told BP in written comments the 11,500 "radio-carbon years" cited by *Nature* "amount to many fewer true (chronological) years (probably closer to 4,000-4,100 years)."

"If one considers the ages given by *Nature* 'in relative



THE TOWER OF BABEL BY PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER (1563)

terms, the new findings are consistent with a dispersion of humans from Babel," said Wise, professor of natural history at Truett McConnell University, "[P]eople making it to western-most Europe, southern-most Africa, and eastern-most Asia first, then coming through the Bering Strait from western Asia into what is now Alaska...

and spreading from there into northern, central, and southern South America.

"So, these remains are most probably of a population of people spreading out from Babel" — a reality he termed "rather exciting!"

Young-earth creationists like Jeanson and Wise believe the universe was created by God's

direct action thousands, rather than millions, of years ago. Other believers known as old-earth creationists also claim God created the universe by direct action, but much longer ago than young-earth creationists contend.

Theistic evolutionists claim God created the universe using the evolutionary process.

Chinese government brings down 50,000-member church

SHANXI, China (BP) — The bombing demolition of a megachurch in China is indicative of a rush to silence Christianity under new laws that will heighten religious persecution, according to human rights group ChinaAid.

The Golden Lampstand Church in Linfen, Shanxi, was home to some 50,000 worshippers before the communist, officially-atheist Chinese government bombed and demolished the church Jan. 9, according to news reports.

Religious persecution is at its harshest in communist China in perhaps 50 years, ChinaAid President Bob Fu told British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News Jan. 11.

The bombing shows "the increasingly deteriorating situation of religious freedom and rule of law in China" under President Xi Jinping, "which many suggest is the worst since the end of the cultural revolution," Fu told the BBC.

"I mean, all the leaders of this church were arrested since this church was built in 2009, and they were sentenced from one to seven years' imprisonment for building this church,



CHURCH LEVELLED — As the Chinese government bombed the megachurch, Golden Lampstand Church in Shanxi on Jan. 9, a passerby captured the destruction on a cellphone, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported. (BP screen capture from BBC)

and many of them were even tortured, and China is now imprisoning more prisoners of conscience than the number combined by the rest of the world," he reported.

Military police directed by the highest government officials detonated explosives in underground worship halls beneath the church and proceeded to

demolish the above-ground building, ChinaAid said.

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., in his Jan. 16 podcast *The Briefing*, called the bombing an admission of fear and weakness in a war the communist nation can never win.

"With 20 centuries of church history behind us, we

can now assure the communist authorities in China that if they thought they could extinguish the Gospel of Jesus Christ by blowing up a building, they've deluded themselves. But we should also note that if the Chinese party in China thought that it was making a statement of its power by excluding this church, it was actually demonstrating its weakness and its paranoia."

Stringent government control of churches, ministerial activities, and religious education is delineated in the Religious Affairs Regulations 2017 law, which takes effect Feb. 1, according to ChinaAid.

The Chinese government also destroyed a Catholic church in 2017, adding to fears of an established pattern as state control tightens.

The Golden Lampstand Church is among many Protestant congregations not registered under the state-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) that places congregations under total government control. Among the new guidelines, all churches or religious groups must register "their establishment, modifica-

tion, or deregistration ... in accordance with the relevant State provisions on the management of social groups," according to a translation of the law provided by ChinaAid.

Churches which register with TSPM forego freedoms associated with Christianity, including evangelism beyond the church walls, the ability to baptize anyone under the age of 18, and the ability to choose church leaders without governmental oversight, Fu told BBC.

Jinping, in power since 2013, has increasingly persecuted not only unregistered churches but also congregations registered with the TSPM, Fu said. Notably, the crosses of more than 2,000 churches have been destroyed in the past three years, Fu said, referencing a so-called governmental beautification campaign that was widely reported.

The U.S. State Department designates China as a "country of particular concern" regarding violations of religious freedom. Religious watchdog group Open Doors lists China as number 43 on its World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is hardest for Christians to live.